

BY THE SAME AUTHOR

THE STUDY OF THE GOSPELS

Crown 8vo. 2s. 6d. net. (*Handbooks for the Clergy.*)

The four following works are issued uniform with this book.

In paper cover, 6d. net each; in cloth, 1s. net each.

SOME THOUGHTS ON THE INCARNATION

SOME THOUGHTS ON THE ATHANASIAN CREED HISTORICAL CHARACTER OF ST. JOHN'S GOSPEL

THE VISION OF UNITY

The four sermons and the paper of which this Volume is composed deal with the question of the unity which it is desired to bring about between the Church of England and the other Protestant bodies in the United Kingdom.

LONGMANS, GREEN, AND CO.

39 PATERNOSTER ROW, LONDON
NEW YORK, BOMBAY, AND CALCUTTA

SOME THOUGHTS ON INSPIRATION

BY

J. ARMITAGE ROBINSON, D.D.

DEAN OF WESTMINSTER

NEW IMPRESSION

LONGMANS, GREEN, AND CO.

39 PATERNOSTER ROW, LONDON
NEW YORK, BOMBAY, AND CALCUTTA

1908

All rights reserved

PREFACE

THE three lectures here printed were delivered in Westminster Abbey on Saturday afternoons in Advent, 1904. I have appended to them an Address which I gave a few weeks before to a select body of Sunday School teachers who had gained the prizes offered by the Church of England Sunday School Institute, as this Address evoked an unexpected interest and so determined the choice of the subject for my Advent lectures. I have also suggested in a Note, in answer to an inquiry which is constantly reaching me, a few recent books which may be helpful to the layman who desires some further guidance in regard to the Old Testament.

WESTMINSTER ABBEY

Christmas Eve, 1904

treaty of Rorundun, but
article expressly excluding

SOME THOUGHTS ON INSPIRATION

I

THE purpose of these lectures is to suggest some thoughts in regard to the Inspiration of Holy Scripture, which may possibly be helpful to two classes of minds, which, while approaching the question from different sides, are alike perplexed by the conflict between modern knowledge and traditional views of the Bible.

There is a large and constantly growing body of men who have come to recognise that the facts of physical science and of the early history of our race are at variance with the conceptions which they learned in their younger days as to the creation of the world and the origin of mankind. They are profoundly assured of the general uniformity of nature, and though they do not in the least wish to deny the possibility or reasonableness of a miraculous interference with it for some adequate purpose, yet they feel that each recorded miracle challenges an ever-renewed investigation

of its historical evidence, and can only win their acceptance when they are able to perceive something of a spiritual necessity for it which reinforces and confirms its external testimony. To such men the historical criticism of the Old Testament comes as a kind of relief, weakening (as it undoubtedly does) the historical evidence for some of the recorded interferences with the course of nature which involve the most serious scientific difficulties. But the process which affords this relief plunges them, at the same time, into a new perplexity. If the Bible is inspired by the Divine Spirit, how can it record what did not actually take place? If an element of human misconception and mistake is to be recognised in the Bible, how can we regard it any longer as an inspired book, or use it as an infallible guide of life? An uncertainty prevails which, as a matter of fact, closes the Old Testament to them, and leads them to doubt whether their whole position in regard to the Christian religion itself is not seriously affected with unreality. They do not wish to disbelieve, but the mainstay of their faith seems to be broken, and there are many voices around them ready to proclaim that they have forsaken the truth and have no part or lot in the Christian Church.

Another class of persons is no less anxiously perplexed. They have hitherto regarded as unquestionable the literal accuracy of the whole

Bible from beginning to end. They have indeed noted some difficulties in the apparent contradiction between certain statements in different parts of the Bible, some discrepancies hard to reconcile. But these things have not really troubled them; they have supposed that a fuller knowledge would in every case provide a satisfactory solution. They are profoundly convinced of the Divine character of the book; they owe to it their very souls; they rest their whole hope for the future on its sacred promises; they know by experience its spiritual power. They are not much impressed by the considerations which make difficulties for others. Miracles, for example, are no stumbling-block to them; confident in God's power to intervene at any point in His own universe, they readily accept all recorded miracles without distinction. By devout and prayerful reading they derive spiritual nourishment from all parts of the sacred book; it always responds to their need, and is its own perpetual justification.

Their perplexity only arises when difficulties are urged upon them from outside; when they see earnest and devout men questioning what to them seems absolutely certain; when the date and authorship of various books is disputed on literary grounds, or when narratives which they have always taken as plain records of facts are interpreted as allegorically, but not literally, true.

Then it seems to them as though the choice had to be made between the Bible as they have received it and no Bible at all. They cannot distinguish degrees of inspiration in the different portions of Holy Scripture, and they cannot understand an inspiration which does not carry with it the entire accuracy of every detail of historical narrative. They are inexpressibly pained by suggestions of human infirmity and ignorance on the part of the sacred writers, suggestions which they consider dishonouring to God's Holy Word and to the Divine Spirit who has inspired it.

Persons who represent each of these classes are doubtless sitting side by side in this church this afternoon. They are, it may be, equally earnest and equally perplexed. Each is holding fast by truth which he knows in his inmost being to be true; each is liable to underrate, or even deny, the truth which the other holds, because he cannot at once reconcile it with what he himself has found to be true.

The Christian teacher who stands face to face with these two classes of persons has a task of no ordinary difficulty. It is well for him if, in his own experience, he knows something of the reality of the truth on either side; if he can recognise the sincerity of both positions; because, on the one hand, he is absolutely convinced of the inspiration of Holy Scripture, and, on the other

hand, he has gladly welcomed the new light which has been thrown upon it by modern science and modern scholarship. He cannot hope to draw into complete accord minds which are so differently constituted, but he may hope, by God's help, to lessen, if he cannot remove, the barrier which keeps them apart.

Two considerations I would beg those who hear me to bear in mind from the outset. The first is what I may call the educational value of difficulty. Every advance in knowledge has been gained at the cost of a great perplexity. The Greeks knew that truth is heaven's response to man's inquiry, that Message is the child of Marvel. We must be patient with the perplexities of our own and of other minds. We must be prepared to take trouble. More than half of our present difficulty arises on both sides alike from an indolence of spirit which refuses the painful task of serious thought.

The other consideration is this: Behind and beneath the Bible, above and beyond the Bible, is the God of the Bible, the God in whose presence we are. The whole purpose of the Bible is to guide us to Him. If the Bible fails to do that for each one of us, it is of no avail that we should accept every syllable of it as infallibly true. If it does lead us to Him, we come in touch with the eternal; our spirits are calm, our minds are free;

we can accept all truth that comes to us from any side, and we can work and wait in faith and patience for the larger truth which will reconcile apparent contradictions.

I shall now invite you to inquire what is the meaning of the word Inspiration, and how as a matter of history it has come to be applied to the books first of the Old Testament and then of the New. Inspiration literally means Inbreathing. It is specially used of the Divine Breath or Spirit of God. It denotes the process by which the Spirit of God reveals to the spirits of men the nature and the will of God. It is primarily used of persons, and only in a secondary sense of the words spoken or written by inspired persons.

Spirit works upon spirit: the Divine Spirit upon the spirit of man. So the old Hebrew writer says of the Divine Wisdom that "in all ages entering into holy souls, she maketh them friends of God and prophets" (Wisd. vii. 27). So a New Testament writer says that "prophecy came not at any time by the will of man, but moved by the Holy Spirit men spake from God" (2 Peter i. 21). So, too, one of the earliest of the prophets himself declares that "the Lord God will do nothing, but He revealeth His secret unto His servants the prophets" (Amos iii. 7).

It has always been the Divine method to select certain men, to enter into peculiar intimacy with

them, to reach their spirits by the direct operation of the Divine Spirit, to purify their hearts, to quicken their perceptive faculties, and to intrust them with a special knowledge of the Divine will and purpose in order that they may be the teachers of their fellow men. This is the primary meaning of inspiration; men are inspired by the contact of the Divine Spirit with their spirits, not for their own sakes merely, or even chiefly, but that they may interpret the will of God to the men of their time.

In a secondary and remoter sense their words, when they come to teach either by speech or writing, may be called inspired words, but only as being the words of men who themselves are "moved by the Holy Spirit." When we understand this we can clearly distinguish between inspiration and dictation. It is conceivable that God might have chosen to inscribe His own words on tables of stone, or to have dictated His messages to man by the hand of any competent scribe, whose intellectual, moral, and spiritual character would have been of no importance, if only he had the pen of a ready writer. But that was not the Divine method. God has always revealed Himself to man through man; "speaking to the fathers in the prophets, He has spoken to us in His Son"; speaking at first in an imperfect and only at the last in a perfect utter-

ance; but speaking always through human lives and human minds. The message was not written by the Divine hand, nor dictated by an outward compulsion; it was planted in the hearts of men, and made to grow in a fruitful soil. And then they were required to express it in their own language, after their natural methods, and in accordance with the stage of knowledge which their time had reached. Their human faculties were purified and quickened by the Divine Spirit; but they spoke to their time in the language of their time; they spoke a spiritual message, accommodated to the experience of their age, a message of faith in God and of righteousness as demanded by a righteous God.

Surely, when we thus contemplate the work of the prophets, we gain a truly noble conception of inspiration. We see it as a process not compelling from without, but guiding from within. The prophet is brought into living contact with the eternal, and he utters as much of it as is possible to be uttered in terms of time. His human faculties are not suspended, but rather they are quickened into fuller activity; his human knowledge and his human intelligence are employed as the medium through which a spiritual message is interpreted to his generation. We are justified in supposing that such inspiration would save him from all mistakes which would obscure

the meaning of his spiritual message. Whether it would equally preserve him from misconception as to facts of natural knowledge or of past history we cannot argue beforehand: we can only learn this from the examination of what he actually has said. It might conceivably be so, or it might not be so. What we are sure is that the spiritual purpose would be safeguarded, that he would rightly recognise the power of God in the processes of nature, and that he would clearly trace the hand of God in his nation's history.

When we pass from the consideration of the utterances of the prophets to their written words, it is important to observe that the Hebrews did not confine the writings of the prophets to the books which at present bear their names. The first part of the group of prophetic books included the books of Joshua, Judges, Samuel, and Kings. These gave the authoritative record and interpretation of the history of the people after they had come into the Holy Land. Even more sacred to the Hebrew mind were the five books of the Pentateuch which dealt with the Mosaic legislation and the story which led up to it. These came to be connected with the name and authority of Moses, the Lawgiver, who was the very greatest of prophets. It was natural also to include among the inspired writings the wonderful Hebrew Psalms, which had gradually

been gathered together in the course of many centuries, as the expression of public and private devotion; and also the moral precepts or proverbial philosophy, the treasured wisdom of many generations, which attached itself to the name of the wise king Solomon, just as the Psalter was connected with David, "the sweet psalmist of Israel."

Presently the sacredness of every fragment of the ancient literature was so strongly felt that in the same category of inspired writings were included, not only a great dramatic poem like Job, but even a story like Esther, in which the name of God is never mentioned, and a Song of Love by an ancient Hebrew poet. The justification of the inclusion of books such as these is to be found when we regard the people as in some sense an inspired people, and consequently their national literature as an inspired literature.

When the great era of prophetic inspiration was past, and no voice any longer dared to cry, "Thus saith the Lord," pious Jews fell back on these old writings, and found in them what they could not find elsewhere. The book took the place of the living voice.

Later still, when the silence had again been broken by the advent of Christ, but when Judaism had refused the new voice which spoke directly from God, the Rabbis fell into a bibliolatry, which

counted every letter of the Hebrew Scriptures, and converted the whole of the Old Testament from being a record of the progressive revelation of God into an infallible utterance of God Himself.

Christianity received the Old Testament from Judaism before this last stage was reached; and the book was claimed by the apostolic writers as the record of the preparation for the Gospel. Their reading of it was dominated by the New Message, which God, who had spoken in the prophets, had now declared in His Son. So far as it could be interpreted as pointing to Christ, the Old Testament received a new and added value: but so far as it gave commands which were inconsistent with the New Message, it was regarded as antiquated, as having served a temporary purpose and as being no longer binding.

In the second century the words of Jesus Christ, so far as they had been remembered and recorded, and the letters of His Apostles, were regarded as a sacred treasury of inspired teaching destined to serve for the permanent guidance of the Christian Church. And not only the words of Christ, but naturally also the record of His life and work, and the record of the early life of the Church itself, under the title of Acts of the Apostles, gained the same character of inspired writings. So by the end of the second century our New

Testament, practically as we have it to-day, had become accepted by the general consciousness of the Church, and lifted to the same level of canonical sacredness as the Old Testament of the Jewish people.

There was, indeed, wide difference of opinion among Christians as to the permanent authority of the Old Testament. Its lower standard of morality distressed many earnest Christian minds. Its anthropomorphism, that is, the way in which it represented God as acting like a man and even appearing in human shape; as being moved by anger and regret, and specially as "hardening Pharaoh's heart" in order to destroy him—these things, and many others, led some Christians to reject the Old Testament altogether, and to declare that the God whom it represented was not the good God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, but an inferior power, just rather than good, from whose dominion Christ came to deliver us.

But the Church was vitally concerned to retain the Old Testament, because it showed the oneness of the Divine purpose through the ages, which had issued in the Incarnation of the Son of God. So a battle was waged round the ancient Scriptures. In order to gain a standpoint from which all adversaries could be resisted, many Church teachers followed the precedent of Jewish

writers, and of the author of the Epistle to the Hebrews, and applied the method of allegorisation, and so justified the ancient narratives as typical of Christ.

The greatest champion of the ancient Scriptures was Origen of Alexandria. After his immense labours the position of the Old Testament was secure. He found a spiritual meaning everywhere, and thus he could place a high value on every word of the inspired books.

It is worth while to pause a moment upon Origen's work. He was one of the most learned and most entirely devoted students of Holy Scripture that the Church has ever known. He learned Hebrew from a Jewish teacher, and soon found that the common Greek version of the Old Testament was very imperfect as a translation, and also differed much from the Hebrew Scriptures, because (though perhaps he was not aware of it) it had been made from older MSS than those which were preserved in his day. He compiled an enormous work called the Hexapla, or six-fold edition, in which he wrote out in six parallel columns the Hebrew text and various Greek translations. The work was so vast and unwieldy that probably it was never wholly copied out again, and we know it now only in fragments. It was a mighty witness to his devotion to the letter of the sacred text.

Besides being the earliest textual critic he was also the earliest systematic commentator. His comments on many passages were rendered into Latin by Jerome, and so they passed through the whole Western Church, and are still to be found reproduced in the commentaries of our own time. No man has ever done so great a work for the preservation and the interpretation of Holy Scripture.

Moreover, he was the greatest advocate of Christian truth in his day. He faced the difficulties of his own age with a mind far beyond that of his contemporaries, a mind which in some respects is strikingly modern. In dealing with Old Testament difficulties, he laid the greatest stress on the witness of the Old Testament to Christ. He said that no one could be firmly and reasonably convinced of the inspiration of the Old Testament until Christ came; and he found Christ in it everywhere, in type and symbol and prophecy. He pressed allegory too far, no doubt, and he was often fanciful in his interpretations. But his instinct was true, and it lifted him high above many obvious difficulties.

I shall close this lecture by reading to you a passage from his book on *First Principles*—a passage which is so modern that it is hard to realise that it was written sixteen hundred and fifty years ago.

He has been explaining how sometimes "the Scripture has woven into its narrative that which never actually occurred," in order that we might not rest content with the superficial sense, but might be forced to search diligently and prayerfully for the underlying spiritual lesson. He goes on to give illustrations of his meaning, and says:—

"For example, what man of sense will think that there was a first and second and third day, evening and morning, without any sun, moon or stars? And who would be so silly as to imagine that God after the fashion of a human gardener had planted a garden in Eden towards the east, and set in it a tree of life, that could be seen and felt, so that one who ate of its fruit with his bodily teeth should acquire life; and again that one should partake of good and evil by eating what he took from a tree of such a character? Moreover, if God is said to walk in the garden in the afternoon, and Adam to hide under the tree, I cannot suppose that any one would doubt for a moment that these things were a declaration of mysteries by means of what seems to be a history, but yet never in bodily fact occurred. Then, again, 'Cain going out from the presence of God' is plainly seen by those who pay any attention to be a statement which forces the reader to investigate the meaning of 'the presence of God' and of 'going out from it.' Why need

22 *Some Thoughts on Inspiration*

I say more, when any one who is not blind can collect multitudes of such examples, written down as though they had occurred, and yet never having occurred in the literal sense."*

These are the words of a man who devoted his whole life to the loving study of the Bible, and who valued every word of it, but whose spiritual instinct released him from a slavish literalism. In his view the Old Testament was a closed book till the Spirit who inspired it gave us the key to its meaning; but then it was luminous indeed with the glory of the coming Christ.

* *Philocalia*, i. 17.

II

I N my former lecture I endeavoured to discuss the meaning of Inspiration, and to trace the process by which the books of the Old and New Testaments came to be regarded as inspired. I wish to say something now of the methods and results of the modern critical study of the Old Testament and of the light which that study throws on the inspiration of it as a whole. It will, of course, only be possible to speak in general terms, and to illustrate a few particular points. At the outset I wish to say something as to the motive which prompts this critical study. Those who condemn it altogether frequently regard it as originating in a dislike of the miraculous: they connect it in their minds with the so-called conflict between the Bible and Science; and they think of it as offering a series of concessions to the supposed results of scientific discovery. Thus we are constantly being warned that many of the discoveries of science are uncertain; that one generation sets aside as obsolete the confident conclusions of its predecessor; that evolution is only a hypothesis, and that Darwin's theory is challenged by later workers; so that in the end

it is quite likely that the biblical account of Creation will prove to be right, and those who have discarded it at the bidding of the science of to-day will be convicted of their irreverence and folly by the science of to-morrow.

Now, it is quite true that astronomy and geology and biology and anthropology have each in turn revealed to us facts which are plainly inconsistent with a literal interpretation of the early chapters of Genesis, and that the recognition of this inconsistency has led the majority of intelligent Christians to fall back on the allegorical interpretation which, as I showed you last week, was so boldly proclaimed by Origen of Alexandria in the third century. It is also true that the recognition of the general uniformity of nature, which is the fundamental principle of modern science, has raised new difficulties in regard to certain of the miracles recorded in the Old Testament. For, while this principle of general regularity cannot reasonably be so far pressed as to exclude the possibility of a miraculous intervention of the Supreme Will on some adequate occasion, yet it does lead Christian men to ask themselves whether the historical evidence for all the recorded miracles of the Bible is in every case equally strong; and consequently most thinking persons have come to admit that there is a vast difference between the historical evidence

for our Lord's miracles, for example, and the historical evidence for many of the Old Testament miracles. In the one case we have practically contemporary testimony for the most part, whereas in the other the testimony is often hundreds of years later than the event.

In ways like these, no doubt, natural science has stimulated the study of the Bible from a new point of view. But though this is obvious, and bulks very large in the popular mind, it has really very little to do with biblical criticism in the proper sense. For biblical criticism proper claims to be an application of the principles of another branch of science altogether—the science of literary and historical investigation. This is the science by which in all directions we arrive at the facts of the past in regard to man's intellectual, moral, and social life. It proceeds by methods exactly analogous to those of the natural sciences—collecting facts, testing appearances, and forming hypotheses which it retains or discards according to their ability or inability to account for ascertained facts. It is progressive, as all science is progressive; it is always ready to modify its conclusions in presence of new facts. But its ultimate results are sure with a scientific certainty.

This science is as much a growth of modern times as most of the branches of natural science. It is being applied with ever-increasing accuracy

to all monuments and documents of the history and literature of the world. We know the immense results which it is yielding for the reconstruction of our own national history. It has also done splendid service in explaining to us the life and growth of the early Christian Church. The criticism of the Old Testament is but a particular application of this science to the literature and history of the Hebrew people; and, if its results are somewhat surprising, they are not to be ruled out because they conflict with our former views, but are to be tested with the utmost frankness by those who understand the processes by which they are reached.

The Christian Church takes its stand on truth, and therefore invites inquiry. Such inquiry is not, indeed, the task of the multitude; but it is the burden of the Church's teachers, who must neglect no investigation which may throw light upon the documents which she holds in her hands, and must welcome every indication which the sacred Scriptures give of the providential process by which they have come to be what they are. Obviously, if the Old Testament is a divinely inspired literature, it must not only bear, but it must challenge, the strictest scrutiny. And that scrutiny must not be conducted only by adversaries or by indifferent judges; the Christian student must be foremost in the investigation,

using all the instruments of scientific research, fearless of consequences, sure that the deeper we probe the more certain we are to arrive at the truth. When the Hebrew priests stepped down fearlessly bearing the sacred vessels into the waters of Jordan, the people followed and entered the land of promise. But when the high priest trembled for the Ark of God, it was a sign that the battle was being lost, and that the glory was departing from his people.

I may, perhaps, make my point clearer if I state it in another way, and offer a simple illustration. It is not, I think, sufficiently observed that the criticism of the Old Testament which has marked the past quarter of a century has been pre-eminently an internal criticism. It is the weighing of Scripture by Scripture, not the judging of Scripture by some external sources of information. Light has come, no doubt, from outside the Bible, and so new questions have been asked of the Bible. But the criticism which seriously concerns us is biblical criticism proper—the minute comparison of verse with verse and word with word, in order to learn what the Bible has to tell us of itself.

Take an example from the story of the Flood. We read a command to Noah to take *two* of each kind of animals into the ark. Lower down we read another command, that he is to take *seven*

pairs in the case of all clean animals. Lower down, again, we read that of all sorts there went in *two and two*, male and female. Our interest is awakened, and we find on closer observation that in the first and last of these three groups of verses the Divine Name is *God* (Elohim), but in the middle group it is *the Lord* (Jehovah). "Thus did Noah; according to all that God commanded him, so did he" (Gen. vi. 22). "Noah did according unto all that the Lord commanded him" (vii. 5). "There went in two and two unto Noah into the ark, male and female, as God commanded Noah" (vii. 9, comp. 14, 15).

Within these same groups we have corresponding differences of words and phrases, as when one group contains the expression "all flesh" again and again, and consistently uses different Hebrew words for the phrases "male and female," and "every living thing," and for the verb "to destroy." In this way we discover that two earlier accounts, written by writers of a different style, have been welded together by the final author of the book of Genesis. Now this we learn from the Bible itself. We can see it in the English version; it is still plainer in the original Hebrew.

A wider survey shows us that the work of these two authors can frequently be traced with undeniable certainty by the recurrence of the same characteristics. For example, Gen. i. to ii. 3 is

the work of the writer who uses the Name *God*; whereas Gen. ii. 4 (and following) comes from the writer who uses the Name *Jehovah*; and you will remember that the first writer gives a very different account from the second writer of the creation of man and woman.

These facts, then, we have from the Bible itself; two narratives which are hard to reconcile in two styles so different as to be obvious even in a translation. We need not be dismayed; we may trust the Bible; we may be sure that when we know it enough it will give a proper account of itself. Already it is telling us that it contains a historical process; that it has grown to its present shape; that there were at least two accounts of these early stories circulating among the Hebrew people; that the Divine Spirit had been using them already for the instruction of previous generations before they were welded together into one complete narrative.

If I am to be true to the Bible, I have no right to shut my eyes to what it has to tell me of itself. Problems indeed are raised, and in some instances very difficult problems; but it is the Bible itself which raises the problems. When I turn to the Gospels, I find a parallel in a part of the Bible of which it has fallen to me to make a serious study during many years, employing just the same literary processes and reaching somewhat analo-

gous results. I take, for example, St. Luke's Gospel. I can trace differences of style in some of the sections; I can even find corresponding differences in some instances in the names given to our Lord. And here I am not left merely to the guidance of such literary signposts. St. Luke himself tells me that others had written already. I find, as a fact, that he has welded narratives from St. Mark with materials taken from another source, and that his own careful hand has constantly modified what he has thus embodied. I cannot always reconcile his statements in detail with those of St. Mark or St. Matthew; but I do not find that these discrepancies affect the character or the work of our Blessed Lord—the message which all the Evangelists together bring us of Jesus Christ—any more than the divergencies within the book of Genesis affect the revelation of the truth about God and man which it is the purpose of that book to teach to all generations.

This is my point: the problems are primarily raised for me within the Bible itself. I have no lurking incredulity as to the possibility of miracles which makes me desire to prove them unfounded. But I do desire to know the true history of the past, and to learn all that the Bible can teach me of the method of its growth and of the manner of its inspiration.

When we extend our inquiry, and compare

Genesis and the other books of the Pentateuch with the Prophets and the Psalms, we gain still more light on the composition of the whole Mosaic history. There is nothing in the books of the Pentateuch to give us the dates of their writing. We can see by their style that they belong to various authors or editors; but to date them we must look to the other books of the Old Testament. Then we learn that Deuteronomy, for example, corresponds in teaching and language with the prophetic work of the age between Isaiah and Jeremiah, while other parts of the Pentateuch are later and tally with the work of Ezekiel and the Exile. Here, again, we are still learning from the Bible itself.

But we may not refuse to learn from other sources as well. The Hebrew race was an offshoot from an older stock. The monuments of Babylonia, written in cuneiform, that is, wedge-shaped characters, on tablets of brick, of which the most important are now in the British Museum, have preserved to us stories of Creation and Flood which are parallel to the Hebrew stories, but inferior in morals and polytheist in religion. These are the stories of the world's childhood, by which men strove to interpret the beginnings of things and to utter their beliefs as to the relation of man to the spiritual forces which govern his life. They are ruder in concep-

tion and earlier in date than the Bible stories in the form in which we know them. They are, as it were, the raw material out of which the finished product was one day to be fashioned in the literature of the Hebrew people.

The existence of such stories is a world-wide phenomenon. Every ancient people is seen to have shaped for itself stories of this nature. The first beginnings of a nation's literature are regularly of this kind. With this thought, then, we come back to the Bible. It is the national literature of a chosen and inspired people, whom God was educating to become the moral instructors of the world. We can understand now that its literature begins with stories of the remote past—stories not essentially differing from the Babylonian folk-lore, but purified and elevated by that Divine inspiration which was fitting the Hebrew people for their appointed task.

We are not now surprised to find two widely different stories of Creation, one following the other, in the opening pages of the Bible—one showing a marvellous insight into the order of the universe, the other interpreting human relationships in a spiritual sense: both alike conveying a Divine message uttered in the picturesque language of primitive men. We see how the Divine Spirit speaks to man through a human medium. He does not suspend the natural law

of the earliest human literature, but claims it for His purpose, and remoulds the ancient stories of the people's ancestors and makes them the vehicles of eternal truths.

So soon as we recognise this principle of the purification and adaptation of the ancient folklore of the Semitic stock, in order to provide in a natural way a series of religious stories by which (to use Tennyson's words) "truth embodied in a tale shall enter in at lowly doors," many of the old difficulties disappear. We see that much of the original drapery of the stories remains, where it could well be allowed to remain without obscuring the religious lesson. Thus we are no longer so surprised to read that "the sons of God (*i.e.*, angels or other beings of more than earthly nature) saw the daughters of men that they were fair," and that the result of their lawless intercourse was a race of giants, whose violence consummated the wickedness which led to the Flood. We are no longer perplexed by the immense ages of the patriarchs, and their gradual diminution as a part of the punishment of sin. We can see how with a growing knowledge of God the Hebrews, in telling the old national tales to their children, were led gradually to remove the mythological and immoral elements, and to introduce everywhere true thoughts of righteousness and of the providence of God. We find in this a sign of

the Divine inspiration working in the people as a whole from very early times, and then at last inspiring priestly and prophetic writers to combine these stories and preserve them in books for generations to come. A purified folk-lore was gradually fashioned into an inspired lesson-book ; and thus in their ultimate form these narratives became sacred and unalterable ; and appeal could be made to them in all time to come as embodying in a picturesque form indisputable expressions of the will of God.

We cannot now go into the later periods and show what the Bible, when carefully studied in a scientific manner, has disclosed to us of its own growth. But I would briefly call your attention to one great gain which has come from the reconstruction of Hebrew history. We are able to see, as we could not before, the steady development of moral and spiritual ideas under the influence of the inspiring Spirit.

All around the Hebrew nation were other nations more or less closely akin to them, with low moral conceptions and gross idolatries. It is the great miracle of antiquity that this one small people should have been lifted to sublime thoughts of the true God, supreme over the universe, the righteous Judge of all the earth. How came this to pass in history ? Their surroundings per-

petually tended to drag them down; how is it that they steadily rose?

The stock from which they sprang, the neighbours by whom they were encompassed, found objects of worship in sacred caves, sacred trees, sacred stones; they practised tribal rites like circumcision; they commonly practised child-sacrifice, especially of the first-born in time of war; they sacrificed to their gods whole towns of their enemies by indiscriminate massacre; they had many wives and concubines, and a low standard of sexual morality, turning even their religion to the service of their lusts. Into such a world the inspiring Spirit entered to lift a chosen race for the sake of all the rest; to implant new thoughts of God, issuing by degrees in new ways of worship and of life; teaching not all at once, but here a little and there a little, as the nation could bear the teaching and assimilate it in practice.

We can trace the remnants of the old ways in a hundred little details. The trees of Abraham and Deborah, the cave at Hebron, the stone at Bethel, show how the old usages are being transformed; the rite of circumcision is still allowed, but as a covenant with the nation's God; the story of the sacrifice of Isaac shows how child-sacrifice, which sprang from the true desire to dedicate the best and dearest to God, is gently set aside,

and the sacrifice of a ram allowed to be substituted; even as the law presently prescribed the redemption of every male child "that opened the womb." Longest, perhaps, lingered the terrible practice of sacrifice by massacre, which was at least tempered by the view that it was the execution of God's judgment upon sin. So the gradual lifting of the people proceeded; marriage was guarded by a law against capricious divorce; though it could not yet be as strict as God's ideal required, "because of the hardness of their hearts": polygamy was still permitted, and other social customs which a more advanced morality has come to condemn, such as concubinage and slavery. But the trend was ever upwards.

The greatest advance was all the while being made in the knowledge of God and of His will. Jehovah, the God of the tribe, appears at first, as it were, a stronger rival of other tribal gods; Israel is to have no mingling of worship; Jehovah is a jealous God; "*Thou shalt have none other gods but Me.*" Many human actions and human thoughts are at first attributed to Him, and even a human form. But in time these grosser attributes are refined, and "the mighty hand and the outstretched arm" are phrases spiritualised by the prophets which we do not shrink from using to-day. Moreover, it was revealed to the prophets that Jehovah was Judge of all the nations, as

well as of Israel; that He was the supreme God of all the earth. But with this exaltation of their thought remained in wonderful juxtaposition two features of their earliest religion: (1) a deep reverence, "the fear of the Lord," and (2) an unequalled familiarity of personal intercourse, "O God, Thou art my God." The enlargement of the thought of God left both of these intact; and the result is for ourselves to-day the sublimest utterance of human devotion, the book of Hebrew Psalms, which has been and ever will be the prayer-book and the hymn-book of the saints of all countries and all ages.

Such, in most imperfect outline, was the process and the issue of the revelation of God through the inspiring Spirit to the people of His choice. The Old Testament is the record of that revelation. The revelation was still imperfect; it was a preparation only, and it waited for its consummation. Still larger and more tender thoughts of God were yet to come, and with them larger and more tender thoughts of the relation of man to man. A purer worship and a higher morality, and a fuller knowledge of God's eternal purpose, were to be revealed. God, who had spoken in the prophets, would speak again; the same God, and by the same method brought at last to its perfection, would speak to human ears by human lips, when the Son of God for us men was made

38 *Some Thoughts on Inspiration*

man. So at length the Old Testament achieved its purpose, and found its justification and its fulfilment in the coming of the Christ to whom it had pointed and led up. Read afresh in the large light of modern study, it is more wonderful than ever before. It tells us more of God, of His long patience and His gentle guiding, of His eternal purpose and His gradual fulfilment of it. It is less difficult because it is more natural, and in no respect is it less Divine.

III

I HAVE been chiefly concerned in these lectures to release the idea of Inspiration from a popular misconception, which has never been authorised by the Christian Church, and which brings the Bible into a wholly unnecessary conflict with the knowledge which we gain from other sources. This lower conception of the work of the inspiring Spirit, this supposition of a dictated book every statement of which must needs be historically and scientifically accurate, has gradually fastened itself on the minds of Englishmen since the middle of the seventeenth century, notwithstanding the silent protest of the Church of England and the open protest of such spiritual reformers as the early Quakers. It is this conception which, as knowledge has increased, has produced so grave a perplexity that many men have closed the Old Testament altogether, and to vast multitudes, unless some help is offered them, it will presently become a sealed book. The laborious researches of a generation of biblical scholars have paved the way for a larger conception such as I have been endeavouring to indicate to you. Nothing that I have said claims to be new; I have only

sought to bring to those who have little opportunity of serious study some thoughts which have frequently been expressed already by others. I stand here to try to help men by telling them what has been helpful to me. My hope is that you who hear me will open your Bibles again and read them with a new interest and a restored confidence. If you will bring an intelligent and reverent mind to the sacred books of the Old Testament, you will find God everywhere in it, choosing a people to bear His name, training them out of ignorance and superstition to an ever-increasing sense of His majesty and His righteousness, not suddenly stripping them of their ancient inheritance of thought and custom and worship, but patiently purifying and sanctifying it for His purpose, educating them by the vicissitudes of their national life, speaking to them through the human lips of their inspired leaders, and planting in their hearts a splendid and indomitable hope that by their means in days to come "the earth should be filled with the knowledge of the Lord as the waters cover the sea." Above all, you will learn how God was thus preparing a fitting medium for the Incarnation, a home for the Christ, whom the prophets dimly foresaw as the Divine King of all mankind, and again, by a startling paradox, as the suffering Servant of Jehovah, bearing His people's sin.

I know that there are many who welcome what I have said as a release from old difficulties and an encouragement to faith. I know also that some earnest and devout minds, who do not feel these difficulties, have heard me with painful alarm. For to them it seems that the foundations are shaken when that which is familiar and helpful to themselves is called in question. It has been always so since the Church began, whenever some larger and unexpected vision of truth has come in sight. I would earnestly remind them of the apostolic word of consolation, spoken to the first generation at a similar moment of distress, concerning "the removing of those things that are shaken, that those things which cannot be shaken may remain" (Heb. xii. 27).

I have spoken thus far chiefly of the Old Testament, for it is there that difficulty is most commonly felt. Before I speak more particularly of the New Testament, something needs to be said of the use of the Old Testament in the New. I have maintained the principle that literary and historical investigation of the Old Testament is a duty which rests upon Christian students, and that the secure results of this investigation must be welcomed as an aid to the understanding of the method and meaning of inspiration. But it is sometimes claimed that there are certain fixed points which the Christian student must regard

as indisputably determined beforehand by references to the Old Testament which occur in the New. Certain books are cited by the names which Jewish tradition had come to assign to them. The great personality of Moses had caused the later generations not only to say with truth that "the Law was given by Moses," but also to refer to his august name the whole of the subsequent development of the living and growing code of social and religious legislation: the Law and "Moses" were interchangeable terms, and Hebrew tradition assigned to him in the end the whole of the Pentateuch, even though the last book contained the story of his own death. In similar fashion the Psalter, though it contained psalms to which other names were expressly attached, was known as "David," and to the great psalmist were assigned all anonymous psalms of the collection.

Again, certain narratives are used by speakers and writers in the New Testament to illustrate parallel events or circumstances under the new dispensation. Some of the most obvious of these will spring at once to your minds.

Now, it is asserted that these books must be by the authors named in the New Testament, and that these narratives must be historical accounts of what actually occurred. Here, then, is a region fenced off from criticism, except so

far as criticism can be used to confirm the conclusions already drawn from the New Testament.

In reply to this assertion we are bound to maintain that criticism cannot be fettered by any such prejudging of cases which must be tried on their merits. We must seek the facts by the proper processes of literary investigation. Some of them we shall find with certainty; others with a high degree of probability. We shall not neglect the evidence that comes from the prevailing view of New Testament times, for that may sometimes be an important factor in the literary argument. But we shall not rule out beforehand facts which the sum total of the evidence goes to prove, because they are not in accordance with the Jewish tradition which prevailed when the New Testament was written; we shall, on the contrary, use them to help us to understand the New Testament in its turn.

Let me show you by a few examples how impossible it would be to press the opposite principle to its logical conclusions. St. Matthew's Gospel (xxvii. 9) quotes the passage of Zechariah (xi. 13) concerning "the thirty pieces of silver," as "spoken by Jeremiah the prophet." St. Mark's Gospel (i. 2, according to the true text) quotes Malachi's words, "Behold, I send My messenger," as "written in Isaiah the prophet." But we shall not surely regard these

two Gospels as saying the final word about the authorship of these quotations.

St. Paul says (1 Cor. x. 4) that the Israelites in the wilderness drank of a rock "that followed them" in their wanderings. But we read no such statement in the Old Testament, and we do not feel ourselves bound to believe the historical truth of the Rabbinic legend to which he was referring, even though he has included it among other scriptural narratives of which he says, "these things happened unto them for examples, and they were written for our admonition" (v. 11). We are content to say that he used a familiar Jewish tradition, which he had no reason to dispute, and which provided him with an illustration of the spiritual lesson which he sought to enforce. We might find further illustrations, if it were necessary, in the Epistle of St. Jude, where we have a quotation from the apocryphal book of Enoch, and a reference to the legend of "Michael the archangel, when contending with the devil he disputed about the body of Moses." The fact that a story of the remote past of Israel's history is appropriated for purposes of instruction does not by itself prove that the story narrates an actual historical event. It shows only that it was commonly accepted and contained a useful lesson. Critical investigation is free to inquire into its historical accuracy.

But it is further urged that our Lord Himself is represented in the Gospels as attributing certain words to Moses and others to David. Does not this at least foreclose the question of authorship? To touch on such an argument is to enter upon the holiest ground, and to approach the deep mystery of the nature of the Incarnation of the Son of God. Let us pause to remember that we are in the presence of the Divine Lord of whom we are speaking together.

I must first repeat that Moses and David were great literary names to the men of that generation. "The Law" was "Moses"; "the Psalms" were "David." The whole of the New Testament shows that the question of authorship was not then raised; it is inconceivable that it should have been raised either by the Galilean apostles or by St. Paul, who was trained in the schools of the Rabbis. As our Lord used the popular tongue, so He spoke in the phraseology of His day, which it would have been only confusing to have set aside. He naturally referred to the sacred books by the names which at once conveyed His meaning to His hearers. Is it right to argue that He thereby incidentally determined the question of their literary authorship?

If it is affirmed that our Divine Lord must have known the exact facts as to the origin and

composition of all the books of the Old Testament, it is those who hazard such a statement who are leaving the paths of reverent reserve. Surely it is more consistent with reverence to search patiently for the facts by the due processes of literary investigation, and, when they are ascertained, to bring them to help us to interpret the Lord's words as recorded in the Gospels. If it is found that Moses or David did not write certain words attributed to them by the ordinary Jewish tradition, then we may be sure that our Lord did not intend by what He said to decide a question of literary authorship. And if it should appear that He did not transcend the best knowledge of His time in these literary details, we shall learn from this something more of the condescension by which the Son of God in becoming man for our sakes entered into certain of the natural limitations of a human life: we shall learn that in this, as in all points, He was made like unto His brethren, save in so far as their faculties were clouded by sin. We know already that in His sacred boyhood He "increased in wisdom" (St. Luke ii. 52): we know, for He has told us, that something of the future was hidden from His knowledge (St. Mark xiii. 32): why should we be unwilling to learn that something of the past as well, which had no obvious bearing on His earthly mission,

should have remained unknown to His human mind?

We answer, then, in the spirit of humility and reverence, that instead of using the Gospels to foreclose inquiry, we must use the results of inquiry to interpret the Gospels. Once again, therefore, in the name of truth we hold open the door. Let inquiry proceed: the light shall help us, as we reverently welcome and use it. We shall not accept every new hypothesis as bringing the light of truth. We shall test the hypotheses with a rigorous scrutiny; or, if we cannot test them ourselves, we shall wait till others whom we trust have tested them. We shall accept for our guidance the considered verdict of the ablest and most devout of the scholars of the Christian Church. We shall ask them to be honest, fearless, and grave, well weighing their responsibility to guide those who cannot undertake the inquiry for themselves.

When we require that the Old Testament must be submitted to the most searching and scientific investigation, do we make the same demand for the New Testament? Is this to be scrutinised with the same freedom of spirit, and are we prepared to accept here also the ascertained results of literary and historical inquiry? Certainly yes; there can be but one answer.

For we claim that Christianity appeared in the

world as a historical movement, at a time when history had begun to be understood and recorded, not indeed with the precision of modern investigators, but with a general sense of the difference between fact and legend. The Christ comes on the world's scene as a historical personality, crowning the historical development of Judaism, summing up the past and opening a new era. We claim that at a certain moment in history God united Himself with man in the historical figure of the Incarnate Son of God. Such claims are a challenge to historical investigation. When we add that Christ carried on His work through a society which He founded to represent Him as His Body on earth, we are pointing again to history and making a further challenge to historical investigation. The New Testament is the literature of that society in its earliest stages, and as such it must be interpreted by the aid of literary criticism. Here are our primary documents: they must be examined and tested by the best apparatus that each generation in its turn can provide.

They are not, of course, the only historical monuments of the Christian history of those days. The very symbol of the Cross, which has been changed from the sign of a felon's death into the sign of supreme self-sacrifice and of victory through defeat—from a symbol of shame to a symbol of glory—is a historical monument of the death

of Jesus Christ which brought about that unparalleled change. The most solemn worship of Christians, the Holy Communion, is a historical monument connecting all the ages that have followed with "the night in which He was betrayed." The Christian Church, above all, is the living monument of the life and death, the resurrection and continual working of its Founder. We are not dependent for our historical certainty solely on a book. The Church is the witness to Christ, as the river is the witness to its source.

The New Testament is the group of early documents which give the historical explanation of these abiding monuments—the Cross, the Communion, the Church itself. These independent testimonies reach back to a time before a word of the New Testament was written: the New Testament is the literary record which helps us to interpret them; and as a literary record it must be tested by the methods of all literary investigation. The results of such investigation must then be used to help us in determining the method and meaning of inspiration as applied to the New Testament. When we have got our facts, we may begin to frame our conclusions as to what inspiration does or does not involve in this particular sphere of its working.

We may view the question here as we did in the case of the Old Testament. We may begin

with the inspired persons, and then pass to the secondary conception of inspired writings.

In Christ the Divine Spirit rested in fulness on the Son of Man. The writer who chiefly emphasises this is St. Luke. If you will trace the word "Spirit" in his Gospel, you will see how at the outset he notes that Zacharias was inspired (i. 67), that his son John the Baptist was inspired (i. 15), and that the aged Simeon was inspired (ii. 25). A new life had come into a select group of holy souls who were "looking for the redemption of Jerusalem": the Holy Spirit was at work afresh. The same Spirit was at work from the beginning in the life of Christ—in the wonder of His birth, in His baptism, in His temptation, in His preaching at Nazareth, and again and again in the course of His ministry. Christ is pre-eminently anointed with the Holy Spirit. If we do not ordinarily speak of Him as inspired, it is only because that word has received a technical sense which seems too limited to express the fulness of the relation of the Holy Spirit to the Incarnate Son. Yet the Epistle to the Hebrews suggests that all the inspiration of the past reached its climax in Christ, when it says that "God having spoken in the prophets . . . hath spoken to us in His Son" (i. 1 f.).

When we read St. Luke's second volume, the Acts of the Apostles, we see that the work of the

Holy Spirit still dominates his thought. Pentecost is the first fulfilment of our Lord's promise of the Spirit; and the whole book is the story of "men moved by the Holy Spirit" and "speaking from God."

Among the inspired men of the primitive Church the most conspicuous is St. Paul. No man ever claimed inspiration more boldly. He does not, indeed, claim inspiration for his writings: these took the form of letters, written on special occasions, and with no idea (so far as we can tell) that they would be preserved and regarded in the future as canonical Scriptures like the books of the Old Testament. But his doctrine and his judgments on grave matters he frequently claims to have directly received from the Spirit of God; though sometimes he takes pains to make it clear that he is only using his own best wisdom, and not speaking at the command of the Spirit.

What St. Paul claimed for himself in the matter of inspiration, he claimed also for the Christian society as a whole—the Body of Christ inspired by the Spirit of Christ, the "one Body" with the "one Spirit." We have here an analogy with the position of the ancient chosen people, which, as we have seen, was inspired as a people to receive and preserve the Divine revelation for the instruction of the world. God still has His elect people, specially trained for the benefit of the

whole of mankind. They are the special sphere of the Holy Spirit's operation—the divinely inspired people of God.

It is their earliest literature which is gathered together in the New Testament. If we ask why the New Testament closes where it does, and consequently excludes such books as the Epistle of Clement and the "Shepherd" of Hermas, both of which were at one time read in some churches; we reply that the general Christian consciousness, after much experience of reading the early books side by side with the ancient prophets in the Christian assembly, gradually reached a unanimous decision under the direction, as we believe, of the inspiring Spirit. As to the Four Gospels and the Pauline Epistles, that decision was reached by about the middle of the second century. As to other books, like the Epistle to the Hebrews, 2 Peter, Jude, and the Revelation, the various branches of the Church held different opinions for a longer time; but at length all agreed in the inclusion of these and the exclusion of certain other books such as those which I have mentioned. Presently this decision was registered by the acts of Councils, and so at last made formally authoritative. It has commended itself to the general mind of the Church, and no attempt of a formal kind has ever been made to reverse it.

The question naturally arises whether inspira-

tion ceased at the point at which the New Testament closes; and if not, why are no further books pronounced canonical and inspired. In view of the perpetual presence of the Holy Spirit promised to the Christian Church, we cannot admit that at any one time the inspiration either of the body or of individual leaders was withdrawn. But we may rightly affirm that such a body of literature belonging to the first age was a providential gift, necessary to the Church as providing an authoritative account of the beginning of Christianity, which might always be appealed to in order to arrest any Church movement which could be shown to be out of harmony with the original foundation of Christ and His Apostles.

As a matter of fact a line does occur in the literary history of Christianity which practically coincides with the line of canonicity drawn by the Church. Consider the most eminent examples of New Testament inspiration, St. Paul and St. John. They were great personalities claimed by the Divine Spirit for the enunciation of truth. As we read the literature of the second century we find to our surprise that, while they still exercise a general influence, they have left no great successors at all comparable with themselves in spiritual or intellectual power. The work of the Church is not continuously carried on by great men; it falls to a number of good men of inferior

attainments. Paul is not succeeded by a great Pauline teacher who develops his master's theology; John leaves no great Johannine teacher to carry out his line of thought.

The most striking figure of the next age is the mystic martyr-bishop Ignatius, who has made a mark in literature by his burning zeal; but his thoughts are a strange medley of St. Paul and St. John, and, though he claims at times to speak by the Spirit, he expressly disclaims the right to teach like the great Apostles. He recognises that their words carry another authority from his own. It is this lack of immediate successors comparable with the great teachers that peculiarly characterises the succeeding generation of Christians. When great teachers come next into sight—as Irenaeus at the close of the second century, who is the first writer to show any clear appreciation of the thought of St. Paul, and especially of the wide purpose of God for the world as St. Paul had conceived it—then they look back over a comparatively sterile tract in Christian literature. It had been an age of great progress in organisation and expansion in numbers, of noble testimony by martyrdom, and of defence of the Christian position by apologies addressed to the world's rulers; but it was not an age of new thinking, and men looked back to the Apostolic age as the great originating period, and they regarded the docu-

ments of the Apostolic age as standing on a higher level of spiritual value than any subsequent writings.

Of the results of the application of critical principles to some of the most important parts of the New Testament I have spoken at some length in previous courses of Advent lectures on the study of the Gospels and on the Incarnation; and these have since been published.* I have there sufficiently indicated, as the outcome of many years of particular study, my own firm conviction of the general historical trustworthiness of the representation of Christ which we find in the Gospels, and my view of the complex literary processes by which the Gospels have taken their present form. It is impossible here to say more, save this one general remark: If when the same methods of criticism are applied to the New Testament as are applied to the Old Testament the results are very different, it is only because the material under examination is of so different a kind. The distance of time between the record and the recorded events in the New Testament is nothing as compared with the distance between the record and the events in many parts of the Old Testament, where it varies from, perhaps, a hundred to a thousand years. For when the

* *The Study of the Gospels* (Longmans, 1902); *Some Thoughts on the Incarnation* (Longmans, 1903).

earliest Gospel records were written down many persons were living who might have been present as eye-witnesses of the events of our Lord's ministry. I repeat that, if the same processes of investigation produce very different results, it is only because the literature to which they are applied is of so different a kind.

But it is time that I should draw to a close. It is difficult to define inspiration. It is always to be remembered that the Church has never attempted a formal definition. It would be as unwise now as at any time in the past to make such an attempt. But inspiration can be known, while it cannot be defined. "The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof." So is it with the operation of the Divine Spirit. We cannot confine it within the limits of our definitions. It is beyond all that we can venture to say of it. We can know it, because spirit answers to spirit—the human spirit to the Divine. Let any man who desires to assure himself afresh of the truth of inspiration read over in some quiet hour the fourteenth, fifteenth, sixteenth, and seventeenth chapters of St. John's Gospel, and ask himself, Is there anything anywhere more convincingly Divine? Or let him read the plain and homely narrative of St. Mark, till the figure of Jesus Christ seems to rise from the page, and then ask, Was not this

evangelist divinely guided to select and combine these simple stories, so as to give us a transcript from the life, and to enable the reader of to-day to take his stand by the peasant folk of Galilee and see what they saw of the living Saviour? Or, once more, let him study the Epistle to the Ephesians, and ask, How came St. Paul by his spiritual vision of the ultimate destiny of the human race, of the revelation of God to all intelligent existences "through the Church," of the glory to God which is yet to be rendered "in the Church and in Christ Jesus"?

Brethren, we have not lost our faith. We move fearlessly forward towards the growing light of a larger day: confident that the Bible will always prove its own inherent power; that its further study will reveal its deeper truths; that as the human element in its composition is more clearly ascertained its Divine element will be more intelligibly recognised: remembering always that it claims an authority over the human spirit such as no other book can claim, and that by our use of it, or our neglect of it, we shall be judged in the day when God calls us to our account.

Note to page 43.—In St. Matthew xxvii. 9 the name "Jeremiah" is omitted by the Old-Syriac palimpsest on Mount Sinai, by two Old-Latin copies (cent. iv.), and by the Peshito (or Vulgate) Syriac. Three Greek manuscripts omit it, an uncial (cent. vi.) and two cursives (cent. ix.-xii.). There is slight evidence of another attempt at correction by the substitution of the name Zechariah, and even in one manuscript of the name Isaiah. But we cannot reject the overwhelming testimony of all the Greek manuscripts (with inconsiderable exceptions), the remainder of the Latin evidence, and the Egyptian, Armenian, and other versions. No doubt the omission was an early one, intended to remove a difficult reading.

It has been suggested that the latter part of Zechariah, which is generally agreed to be the work of some other prophet, may have been written by Jeremiah, so that St. Matthew may be right after all. But I cannot find that serious critics of the Old Testament accept this view. It is better, with Origen and Augustine, to admit the difficulty; and then we may try to learn its lesson.

APPENDIX A

AN ADDRESS TO SUNDAY SCHOOL TEACHERS

THE importance of the work in which you are engaged may be measured by the extraordinary anxiety which is being shown throughout the whole country as to the teaching of religion to children. I will not enter into that controversy further than to say that to me the vital point is to secure that whoever teaches the Gospel story to children shall believe that Christ is what the Gospel represents Him as being. The religious lesson should be given by a teacher who believes what he is to teach. I do not in the least wish to substitute a clerical for a lay teacher. Whatever part may be taken by a clergyman, the main work should rest with the school teachers. It is their great privilege, and they must not be robbed of it.

Whatever may be the issue as to the teaching of religion in the Day School, the work of the Sunday School teacher will still be necessary, and every year seems to make it more important. But every year also makes it more difficult. Questions arise now which an earlier generation was not called upon to face in the same way. A higher standard of knowledge and of thoughtfulness is required, and

you do well to fit yourselves as fully as you can for your work.

The Book which you hold in your hands as teachers has not changed. We have changed. Much new light has been given to us by God in regard to our own constitution and the constitution of the world in which we live; and in this new light, which is shining all around us, and which comes to all of us at least in scattered rays here and there, we read the Bible differently. Our whole conception of the method of its inspiration has been altered. A great deal which our forefathers took literally we cannot take literally to-day. The first chapter of Genesis no longer means to us that the world was made in six days. The second chapter of Genesis no longer means to us that God moulded clay into a human figure and breathed upon it, or that He took a rib from Adam and made Eve. These are allegories or parables to us.

They still proclaim their original spiritual lessons. They teach that God is the source of all creation; that God works in patient, slow development; that the lower comes before the higher; that the highest and the best is man; that man is akin to the beasts that perish, but also akin to God; that he is God's image in the world. All this is untouched by modern discovery; it is the underlying spiritual truth, taught in the form of what was at first literally believed, but for us is a parable. And so, again, we believe that God made man out of dust, not by moulding clay, but through a long process of

development which followed a course which He had marked out, and in every step of which He was working His will. So we believe that through holy marriage man and woman become intimately one, in a union which God has made and which man must not break. This is the underlying truth of the old-world story which makes Adam say, "Bone of my bone and flesh of my flesh." These and many other stories, like that of the talking serpent and the talking ass, we do not now take (or, at any rate, most of us—I do not) as literal statements of historical facts, but as imagery which clothes certain spiritual lessons.

For ourselves this is not, perhaps, very difficult; but when we come to teach it is not easy. With quite young children there is very little difficulty, for stories are the natural vehicles to them of moral lessons, and they do not often ask, Is it true? or, Did it really happen? But older children want to know, and we must be prepared to give them an honest answer. It is not merely at the time that we must retain their confidence, their confidence in us as teachers and confidence in the spiritual truths we are teaching them; but we must so teach them that when they go away from us they will not be overthrown by the first question they hear, as, for instance, where Cain got his wife from. We must teach them in such a way that they will not at any time have to unlearn their lessons. We must be prepared to say to them that these are the old-world stories which God allowed to be told, to teach

certain great lessons, which were easiest learned and easiest remembered so : for us they are parables—earthly stories with a heavenly meaning.

I give these as illustrations of difficulties that are to be met with. There are many more and many greater difficulties in connection with the Old Testament and the New Testament than these. I have spent most of my life in the study of these matters, and I feel that there is a mass of difficulty which has not yet been solved ; but those other difficulties do not so directly concern the teaching of children, and even our learned theologians are not clear about a good many. What I would say to you is, Do not expect that everything is going to be cleared up and made absolutely plain. The Bible is a much more wonderful book than we have sometimes thought. Much of it is plain and stands out clearly, but much is difficult of interpretation. Welcome all the light from nature and from study, from science and from criticism ; and do not despair because the problems will not come out.

After all, your chief work is not with the difficulties of the Bible. It is to teach Christ to the children ; to take the incidents of the Gospel, and show what Jesus was like, what He did for people to help them and give them new hope and save them from their weaknesses and sins ; and then to say, He is the same yesterday and to-day and for ever ; He loves you, as He loved children then ; He has shown His love even unto His death upon the Cross ; He ever lives to help and save you.

This is your message, and no new difficulties need obscure it. If you can say, It is not only in the Book, but I know it in my own life—then you will carry conviction, and your work will live in the lives of others.